



CONSERVATORIUM HIGH SCHOOL JUNIOR VOCAL STREAM (Yrs 7 & 8)

RATIONALE

The Conservatorium High School has long recognised as something of an anomaly the fact that it has not admitted into the junior school students whose primary medium of musical expression is voice. From its inception in 1918, the school's focus has been almost exclusively on instrumental music in the Western classical tradition. This bias is understandable given the school's historical symbiotic relationship with the tertiary arm of the Conservatorium [SCM] which, by definition, concerns itself with the education of post-secondary music students. Moreover, understanding and training the pre-pubertal and young teenage voice is a specialist area of vocal pedagogy outside the remit of the University of Sydney's music faculty, the SCM.

Although the school's music program [Board Endorsed Course] recognises the importance of singing in the training of young musicians, hitherto the school did not have the wherewithal to be able to afford junior vocal students musical training that is both tailored to their particular needs and is comparable in breadth and rigour to that undertaken by instrumental students. In 2012 this longstanding anomaly was rectified.

In 2012 the Conservatorium High School launched its Junior Vocal Stream [JVS] with a small cohort of vocal students (approx. 8-10) entering Yrs 7 & 8. Their musical training combines pertinent elements from Con High's music program with specialist coaching and vocal ensemble skills by arrangement with the Sydney Children's Choir [SCC]. The music-educational development of the JVS students is overseen by the school's director of vocal studies.

OUTLINE

Initially, the Junior Vocal Stream will cater for students starting their first year of high school (Yr 7) or entering Yr 8. Like all Conservatorium High junior students, those in the JVS will follow the Stage 4 & 5 Mandatory and Elective Music courses together with the Board Endorsed Course and undertake the usual academic subjects.

For students in the JVS the primary medium of instruction will be voice and, accordingly, the teacher with responsibility for the JVS, of necessity, will be a vocally-trained music specialist. While the pedagogical modes of delivery of the instrumental and the vocal stream may differ, the syllabus requirements and learning outcomes for all junior students are essentially the same.

The distinctive feature of the JVS is its articulation with the Sydney Children's Choir. Students in the JVS will receive vocal training both at school, through the Con High's choir and small vocal ensembles, and outside school hours, through the coaching and workshops that are conducted by staff of the SCC. Students accepted into the Conservatorium High's Junior Vocal Programme become members of the Sydney Children's Choir and will be expected to meet the usual SCC requirements regarding attendance at rehearsals and performances.

ARTICULATION WITH EXISTING STREAMS

In accepting children into the JVS the school is powerfully aware of the variability of the maturation process as it affects the young singing voice. There can be no guarantee that the vocal quality and potential identified at audition will be retained and blossom as the teenage voice settles following puberty. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for Con High students to discover among the rich offerings at the Conservatorium another medium of musical expression that claims their passion and this realisation may lead to their changing Majors, from the one presented at audition to a different instrument, to composition/arranging/conducting [CAC] or to voice. For this reason, the school insists that students in the JVS must have a Minor Study: either an orchestral instrument (string or wind) or CAC. The factors bearing upon the selection of a Minor study can be discussed with students and their parents by the Principal shortly after the formal offers of placement have been advised.

SELECTION PROCESS

In accordance with the Department of Education policy on gifted and talented education [PD/2004/0051/V03], the selection process will involve assessment according to 'multiple criteria' involving 'a mix of objective and subjective assessments'. The process will be conducted by vocal experts and experienced music educators.

All applicants will be auditioned by a panel of vocal specialists, and by Ms Lyn Williams (Gondwana Voices/ Sydney Children's Choir).

- Audition (8-10' duration). The panel is not expecting outstanding vocal ability; it is looking for intrinsic musicality. Applicants are asked to prepare **two songs**, one with and one without accompaniment; however, it is quite likely that only one will be selected. Sight-singing ability and aural skills will also be tested.

In addition to the results of the vocal audition, the application portfolio will include the following types of data:

- nominations by parents/caregivers, peers, self and teachers
- off-level testing
- standardised tests of musical ability
- NSW Selective Schools Tests (strongly preferred) or *WISC-IV [Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, 4th ed., 2004]*
- academic grades

<http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/gats/assets/pdf/polimp.pdf> see §6.4

Applications for the Junior Vocal Stream will be considered by the Placement Panel, consistent with the procedures for placement at the Conservatorium High School.